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ABSTRACT

The role of the speech communication department chairperson in faculty evaluation has become increasingly crucial. Since many schools are at or near their prescribed tenure limits, the chairperson must become more and more definitive in evaluating faculty candidates for tenure and promotion. One solution would be to provide annual faculty reviews. This would require each faculty member to keep a folder of current documents in the departmental office so the chairperson can better remain informed of faculty interests, endeavors, and accomplishments throughout the academic year. Faculty evaluations have two purposes: formative--intended to improve performance; and summative--designed to sum up performance for some kind of judgment for personnel decisions. A department's evaluative criteria must be compatible with those of both the institution and the school in which it is situated so that the contributions of faculty members are appropriately recognized at all higher committee and administrative levels. Evaluative areas include teaching (using student evaluations and colleague judgments); research and creative works (giving recognition to media productions, theatre productions, original slide collections, and so on); and service (going beyond the administrative type to include public and community service). Evaluation, as threatening to the ego as it is, is necessary and it is the chairperson's responsibility to make it work effectively. (HOD)

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Chairperson's Perspective on Faculty Evaluation

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The role of the department chair in faculty evaluation has become increasingly crucial. Once the chair's main concern was with hiring and keeping competent faculty members so they would be granted what seemed like automatic tenure and promotion. Now, enrollments have tapered in many institutions, [redacted] faculty expansions are unnecessary, and even where individual department enrollments have expanded, such as in Communication & Theatre at IUPUI, the overall budgets are so tight that those needed expansionary slots are not likely to be provided. Many schools are at or near their prescribed tenure limits; in fact, the AAUP reported in 1977 that 62 percent of all college and university faculty members already had tenure.[1] Under these circumstances, the institutions, with chairpersons assuming critical decision-making responsibility, must become more and more definitive in evaluating faculty candidates for tenure and promotion. Even tenured faculty members not up for promotion must be constantly evaluated, along with the others, because the chair often must recommend divisions of a small, annual incremental salary pie among his faculty on the basis of merit. So, evaluation is a touchy area which cannot be avoided. As Stephen M. Archer noted in the ACA BULLETIN of August, 1981:

> "The chair's responsibilities include the assessment of the quality of each faculty member, just as the responsibility of any professor includes the evaluation of . . . students' work. One exercises one's professional judgment, gained after a certain number of years in the profession, or one does something else for a living.[2]

Soon after becoming a chairperson at IUPUI in 1975, I was handed the task of implementing a new procedure established by our

campus' faculty council which stated that "the mandated annual review policy for non-tenured faculty has been extended to include annual review for all faculty below the rank of professor, whether tenured or not. In essence, this move is taken to be certain that our promotions procedures are in accord with affirmative action requirements."[3]

For equity's sake, or perhaps because I subconsciously wanted to be the goat scaped by all, I requested that every faculty member of our department, even tenured full-professors, be reviewed annually. Evaluation is inherent to all those mandatory reviews, and therefore is a significant part of my departmental operation.

Faculty annual reviews, invclving evaluation, have definite advantages besides guaranteeing affirmative action alignment. Not the least of these is the requirement for each faculty member to keep a current folder of documents in our departmental office so the chairperson can better remain informed of interests, endeavors, and accomplishments throughout the academic year. That dossier can also serve as a nucleus of documented materials from which a review committee can work. Such ongoing record-keeping should help the faculty member stay aware of trends or directions in his or her work, thus serving as an added incentive for follow-up work and goal-setting. Finally, those evaluative materials assist a chairperson in more fairly assigning the aforementioned merit salary increases.

Faculty evaluations have two purposes. They may be formative, i.e. intended to improve performance, or they may be summative, i.e., designed to sum up performance for some kind of judgment for

personnel decisions. The chairperson uses them for both in that he at least partially bases administrative decisions on them, and he assists the faculty member in interpreting them for developmental or performance-improvement purposes.

A department's evaluative criteria must be compatible with those of the institution and school in which it is situated so the contributions of faculty members are appropriately recognized at all higher committee and administrative levels. Thus, as I give my views on evaluation, I shall occasionally explain their relationship with requirements of the higher administration.

To help avoid misunderstanding, our department's new faculty members write to the chair a statement of their perceived duties and responsibilities as they relate to the description of the job for which they were hired, and to the school and university tenure and promotion requirements. Then the chairperson responds in writing and orally so there is mutual agreement. For instance, the Indiana University ACADEMIC HANDBOOK requires that a candidate should "normally excel" in at least one of the categories of (1) teaching, (2) research and creative work, and (3) service.[4] So, the candidate determines what to emphasize in light of the general constraints of his or her position.

What does a department chairperson encourage the new faculty member to do in fulfilling those university evaluation requirements? Hopefully, a person was hired who will find that the job demands and his scholarly efforts conform. This is a chief consideration by the chairperson when the appointment is made. In his book, Developing Programs for Faculty Evaluation, Richard I. Miller wrote:

> A happy professional marriage is based on compatibility, similar lifestyles, and generally compatible expectations between the individual and the institution. The rub comes with younger faculty members who usually travel through several institutions to achieve their professional goals. These upwardly mobile young teachers may be out of phase with many colleagues because publications and research are very much part of their future employer's value pattern, if not their current one's.[5]

Whatever a chairperson's value pattern, he or she owes the young, upwardly mobile candidates an opportunity to enhance personal marketability by emphasizing the kind of activity which will keep them attractive to possible future prospective employers in our discipline. This includes opportunities for research, publication, refereed creative work, and the kind of service which is readily accepted as professional development. A great deal of committee work in this phase appears unjust.

With that as a preface, I wish to explore the evaluative areas of teaching, research, and service, from the perspective of a chairperson of a department encompassing communication, theatre, and telecommunications.

TEACHING: If there is an area which chairpersons commonly stress in making their summative evaluations it is probably teaching:

> In 1976, 453 department heads at 134 colleges and universities responded to a request for their methods used to evaluate faculty for promotion, salary increases, or tenure (Centra, 1977a). The majority of . . . liberal arts colleges, and masters-level institutions place major importance on the quality of teaching performance, a

finding also indicated by other surveys (Seldin, 1978; Astin and Lee, 1969).[6]

Yet, despite surveys, there has been question about how much weight teaching actually receives in promotion and tenure decisions because chairpersons could be giving "lip service" to that area. Centra proceeds to say:

> Given the increasing number of Ph.D.'s looking for academic jobs, universities trying to establish national reputations are more selective regarding scholarly activity and publications. Good teaching by itself has increasingly become a necessary but not a sufficient reason for promotion.[7]

Indeed, excellence in teaching is significant at IUPUI. Although we have a pending M.A. proposal in three areas of applied communication unique to our urban environment, we still place high value on classroom teaching in our existing undergraduate program. In monitoring that teaching, IU's Multi-Op Course-Instructor evaluation instrument is administered in all courses taught in our department each semester. There are dangers of overusing student ratings, but for evaluative purposes we realize that especially "for nontenured faculty members . . . more frequent collection of ratings is desirable if the results are to be used in tenure and promotion decisions."[8]

While these Multi-Op student evaluations are not used without other judgments on teaching, they well supplement other documentation. Some in our department have suggested that instructors who give higher grades will receive higher student ratings. Yet, a synthesis by Richard Miller of surveys on the subject concludes that: "no significant relationship exists between course grades, achievement, or grade point average and student course ratings."[9]

Statistical research has affirmed that "there seems to be no overriding evidence that students rate an instructor more favorably or unfavorably on the basis of the grades they anticipate receiving." Centra reports that "the correlation between grades and ratings is usually in the .20 range."[10]

As a means of achieving greater intradepartmental insight into the non-correlation between grades and ratings, this chairperson recently conducted a study on the subject at IUPUI. All sections of lower and upper division courses taught by full-time faculty members were tabulated for the five successive semesters from Spring, 1979, through Spring, 1981. There were 2,235 students in 125 sections taught by full-time faculty, during that period. The correlation between grades and ratings was only .30, with no significance to be found.

Another issue in our department has been that alumni are a more effective source of instructor evaluation than current students. Yet, studies on that subject suggest that most teachers rated poorly by students are also rated poorly by alumni. Based on three major projects conducted on that subject by different sources in 1951, 1974, and 1978, we may conclude that: "Because of the general agreement between student and alumni ratings, there seems to be little need to use the latter in faculty tenure and promotion decisions. Ratings by current students provide similar information and are much easier to collect." [11]

Nonetheless, there are some variables which should be considered by chairpersons when using student ratings, e.g. (1) A sufficient and representative number of students should rate each course, and ratings for several courses can give more accuracy. In this regard, small classes usually get high ratings; (2) Elective courses or

courses in the major tend to be rated higher than courses to fulfill a college requirement; and (3) Global items testing more overall effectiveness, rather than specific diagnostic items, should be emphasized.[12] The IU Multi-Op features thirteen such global items which are required core questions for arts and sciences. So, when used cautiously, student evaluations serve a valuable function. Now, over half the liberal arts colleges are reported to use them extensively, and our department has chosen to do likewise.[13]

To supplement student ratings, there should be colleague judgments of teaching effectiveness. However, the idea of classroom visitation and observation is perhaps not the most effective means of colleague evaluation. Professional colleagues might more perceptively judge the content or substance rather than the process. Instead of classroom visits, a more thorough substantive observation can be made by scrutinizing the choice of text, the course syllabus and objectives, reading lists, assignments, and exams. Colleagues can determine how well the faculty member knows and stays conversant with his discipline. Further, they can study exams, papers and projects, including oral ones, which contain written comments or critiques to the students.[14]

Communication and theatre performance courses do provide the additonal feature that theoretical courses cannot. If classroom visits are to be made, perhaps they could be done more effectively during student-performance sessions rather than instructor-lecture ones. Behavioral objectives can be studied by the colleagues in advance so competencies can be demonstrated by the students which are not possible on paper-and-pencil tests.[15] But even this observational practice must be highly qualified because of the imponderables concerning prior knowledge and proficiency of student performers.

In studying colleague evaluations in general, especially for tenure or promotion, a chairperson should beware of possible distortions because of mutual backscratching or professional jealously. Overall, teaching is the area of evaluation which probably needs the greatest diversity of measurement and documentation if it is to be summatively emphasized in an administrative decision.

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORKS. Traditional research has long received much attention and probably has the least amount of conflict concerning quantitative and qualitative judgments relevant to administrative decisions. But a chairperson has a responsibility to match the research or creative work with the assignment the faculty member was hired to fill. Two authors in a recent ACA BULLETIN emphasized the same point: that a faculty member's assignment and the research or creative work for which he or she expects recognition from the chairperson, should be merged. There might be some excellent areas for research that are unrelated or peripheral to the faculty member's job. Stephen Archer mentions such areas as peace studies, women's studies, and pop culture.[16] One might add such areas as my own specialty of black studies, or chicano studies, or futurism. Robert Davis similarly asserts that materials submitted in an evaluation portfolio should be a "clearly defined part of the work for which the person was contracted."[17] The chairperson at the time of hiring has a responsibility to communicate with that new instructor what "kinds of publications will be appropriate in her/his case."[18] Or, if a new area of research interest emerges with a faculty member, its relationship with that instructor's assignment in the department should be discussed with the chairperson so misunderstandings are avoided--perhaps adaptations can be made that are academically beneficial to all involved.

Perhaps most important to our discipline, however, is the role and weight that creative work plays in decisions on tenure, promotion, and salary increments. In an attempt to clarify this issue, an ad hoc committee in the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts issued a "Statement on Tenure and Promotion Procedures," on December 5, 1980, in consultation with the Office of Academic Affairs. In it they established more definitive guidelines by specifying that in addition to refereed articles, books and various monographs, should be considered the "quality of other materials which reveal scholarship and creative endeavor (e.g., media productions including original slide collections, radio and television broadcasts, theatre productions, etc.)" [19]

The issue is one of how much those creative works count as such in the chair's perspective. They should count to the extent that they are critically assessed by appropriate sources. Robert Davis asserts that: "No matter what measures or combination of measures are applied to a given work, an assessment of the quality and worth of the work must be made. The creative work must have been subjected to the equivalent of the jurying process associated with the evaluation of scholarly work."[20] Now, it becomes a matter of making certain the creative works are presented for critical assessment in some way. Otherwise, in Davis' opinion, "they carry little weight in the evaluation process."[21]

Who is to assess the creative work? Chairpersons in a diversified department such as IUPUI's cannot be experts in all areas within their purview. "Most promotion, tenure, and salary decisions are made at the level of chairmen and deans, and these persons may or may not have a background in a creative field--do not know what 'counts' in terms of creative production and they do not know how

to assess it."[22]

Yet, the creative works can and should be appropriately evaluated by scholars, possibly at other institutions. "Survey results (Centra, 1977a) suggest that peers at other institutions are being increasingly called on for their opinions."[23] Whether it is an individual expert or a panel of experts, the evaluators must be prepared to show that the work is valuable according to some kind of established standards. In some instances, it might have won festival awards and prizes; these are graded from the national level, regional level, and downward. They might have received some kind of published reviews, with those from solely local works having somewhat less value. The standards fall within a range that can be determined somewhat easily. For instance, judgment by American College Theatre Festival critics could well be the same as refereed articles.

From a chair's perspective, it is important for the faculty member to gather materials and establish the case for the critical work's value, just as a writer's article is refereed or a writer keeps abreast of reviews of the book he has written. Davis says: "It is the responsibility of faculty members to provide adequate documentation of their work and assessment of its quality in a way which is clear and useful to those who must make evaluative judgments about it."[24]

SERVICE. In an expanding, urban university department such as ours, much service is of the administrative type. Our two newest areas are telecommunications and organizational communication. The faculty appointee in each area was made director of his program, and his service at first primarily involved curricular design. Each program features an internship, and the next service phase is to establish internship cooperation with appropriate facilities

in the community. The director of each new area uses community facilities as labs for conducting studies and experimenting with program development. Thus, the community service and research portions of their work are nearly inextricable.

Our theatre area has touring contingencies with both university theatre and the children's theatre company. This diversifies student experience and at the same time provides community-outreach services.

The listener's theatre program operates as a therapeutic activity by featuring participatory programs with patients at hospitals and other institutions. Debaters present forums on public issues at civic and other organizations. Further, faculty members of our department serve in numerous other capacities such as consultants, workshop directors, advisors, and speech and theatre contest judges and coordinators. Administrators of our institution have encouraged public service in our metropolitan environment. In this sense I apparently differ from most chairpersons as: "Public and community service is infrequently recognized and rewarded. A survey of department heads (Centra, 1977) indicated that only two percent considered public and community service to be a critical factor in evaluating faculty members, while a third said it was not a factor at all. Most said it was a minor factor."[25]

In order especially to keep abreast of policies which affect our students, faculty, and resources, the faculty members who regard themselves as less professionally mobile are encouraged to participate in school and university committee work. All members of the faculty are likewise establishing liaisons with those units of the institution for which our department does or can provide service courses.

To keep abreast of their fields, our faculty members participate extensively in state, regional, and national organizations in communication, theatre, and telecommunications. As well as participating himself, the chair's role here is to (1) motivate his faculty members to do so, and (2) insist that such professional involvement be recorded thoroughly in the faculty members' dossiers. Sometimes the service will be involved with creative work, as in touring theatre or certain radio and television tasks. Sometimes the service will be done in conjunction with research projects as perhaps in organizational communication. Regardless, the chair must admonish the prospective reviewees that: "It is not enough simply to report that the work was done. Properly reported, documented and evaluated, the service area can contribute strongly to the overall evaluation." [26]

In the final analysis, the chair has ultimate responsibility for establishing evaluation committees, personally remaining knowledgeable about faculty members' contributions, and recognizing the need for seeking outside help in specialty areas which neither he nor his faculty members are qualified to evaluate. It is the chair who develops and coordinates evaluation on the departmental level. Multiple sources of information should be used to check wrong decisions wherever possible. Regardless, evaluation is threatening to the ego; it sometimes hurts, and creates bad feelings. I doubt if anybody really enjoys it. But it is necessary, and the chair must try to make it work effectively.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cited in John A. Centra, Determining Faculty Effectiveness: Assessing Teaching, Research, and Service for Personnel Decisions and Improvement (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979), p. 2.

2. Stephen M. Archer, "Balancing Non-Traditional Factors for Promotion and Tenure in a Traditionally Structured Department," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, August, 1981, p. 24.

3. "Review Procedures and Policy," PROCEDURES FOR PROMOTION OF INDIANAPOLIS FACULTY, (Academic Affairs Pamphlet, 1977), II, F.

4. ACADEMIC HANDBOOK, 1976 Edition, Indiana University, 1976, p. 61.

5. Richard I Miller, Developing Programs for Faculty Evaluation (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974), p. 19.

6. Centra, Ibid., p. 4

7. Ibid. p. 7.

8. Ibid, p. 154

9. Miller, Ibid.,p. 60.

10. Centra, Ibid., p. 31.

11. Ibid., p. 41.

12. Ibid., p. 152.

13. Ibid, p. 9.

14. Ibid, p. 82
Among the substantive questions for a chairperson to ask are:
    a. Instructor objectives and activities:
    Did the teacher's objectives for the course fit in with the department and school curricula? To what extent did the instructor integrate the course with others that preceded it or that will follow it.
    b. Textbooks, handouts, reading and reference lists, syllabi:
    Are they current and relevant? Are they at an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge for the class? Do they fit in with the course outline and supplement lectures and class discussions?
    c. Lecture notes:
    Are they well organized and in a logical sequence?
    Are they up-to-date? Do they include useful examples and varying viewpoints?
    d. Assignments and projects:
    How do they fit the course objectives?
    Are they relevant learning experinces or "busy" work?
    Are assignments and projects coordinated with the rest of the syllabus material?

14. e. Examinations and grading:
Do exams assess a wide range of skills and knowledge?
How do examinations relate to course objectives?

15. John D. Clark, "Measures of Student Learning," in Centra, Ibid, p. 101.

16. Archer, Ibid., 23

17. Robert E. Davis, "Evaluating Faculty Creative Production," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, August, 1981, p. 18.

18. Ibid.

19. Ad Hoc Committee of IUPUI School of Liberal Arts, "Statement on Tenure and Promotion Procedures," 12-5-80, V, A, 4, p. 3.

20. Davis, "Evaluating Faculty Creative Production," Ibid., p. 20

21. Ibid., p. 19

22. Robert E. Davis, "Faculty Evaluation in Broadcasting and Film," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, August, 1979, p. 23.

23. Centra, Ibid., p. 121

24. Davis, "Faculty Evaluation in Broadcasting and Film," Ibid., p. 23.

25. Centra, Ibid., p. 133

26. Davis, "Faculty Evaluation in Broadcasting and Film", Ibid, p. 23.